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### BOOK REVIEWS

THE COMMON DISEASES OF THE SKIN. A Handbook for Students and Medical Practitioners. 3rd Edition by R. Cranston Low, M.D., F.R.C.P.E., F.R.S.E. Edinburgh: Messrs. Oliver and Boyd. 1939. Pp. 319 with 48 illustrations. Price 10s. 6d.

THERE are numerous handbooks on Skin Diseases but few which approach the standard set by this volume. The clear descriptions, dogmatic views and literary style assure for it a wide appreciation by both students and practitioners.

This third edition has been brought fully up to date and conforms with the more modern views on ætiology and treatment. All the more common conditions of the skin are considered as well as certain of the more rare conditions which might on occasions be of importance to practitioners, while the text is supported by an excellent collection of descriptive illustrations, several of which are in colour.

The first chapter follows tradition in dealing with the normal skin and a general consideration of diagnosis and treatment, but Dr. Low has succeeded in giving an unusually clear and concise introduction to the subject which will greatly assist the uninitiated in grasping the fundamental principles underlying Dermatology. Stress is laid on the great importance of VISUAL MEMORY in the study of diseases of the skin and this alone should help the student to approach the subject with less bewilderment and to remove the tendency to regard this branch of Medicine as obscure—a tendency which is very largely due to an incorrect approach to the subject. This simplification is apparent throughout the book in the careful grouping and classification and the avoidance, as far as possible, of unnecessarily complicated nomenclature.

The sections on infestations, urticaria and infantile eczema are especially good; in fact, only the index is inadequate. The balanced interpretation of the parts played by internal and external factors results in the presentation of the subject in a manner which will prove of considerable practical value.

D. E.

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COMMON SKIN DISEASES. By A. C. Roxburgh, M.A., M.D., F.R.C.P. Fifth edition. London: H. K. Lewis. 1939. Pp. 450. 179 illustrations. 15s.

IN this work, which is one of the well-known General Practitioner Series, there have been few changes in the new edition apart from minor alterations and additions in the text and the inclusion of fourteen new illustrations.

Written from the standpoint of the general practitioner, it deals only with the more common conditions which are likely to be encountered, while differential diagnosis is considered in unusual detail.

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The methods of treatment which are advocated are those which can reasonably be considered to come within the scope of general practice, but passing reference is also made to special treatments which could be employed.

The excellent index of Preliminary Diagnoses is retained and occupies the first eleven pages where possible diagnoses are tabulated under the headings of principal lesions of an eruption. This is a most valuable section of the book and must have given the first clue to many a harassed practitioner in the dark obscurity of dermatology.

The first chapters consider in some detail the general principles of pathology, signs, diagnosis and treatment in an endeavour "to get students to approach dermatology as a rational subject and not as a mere collection of hybrid Greek and Latin names." The sections that follow are well and clearly written so that a grasp of the subject can be easily obtained. Sections on Tuberculosis, Syphilis and Toxic Eruptions are especially good in that they give a simple and clear account of the various manifestations.

The work does not claim to be comprehensive so that errors of omission need not be unduly criticised. As far as it goes the book gives a good introduction to the subject with concise descriptions of the pathology, symptoms and signs, frequent classifications and the more generally acceptable opinions of ætiology. It does, however, tend to regard skin diseases as local lesions and not as outward signs of internal derangements which in many cases they are. It is claimed that "drugs by the mouth have a certain limited value in dermatology." Vaccines gain grudging approval but it is not stated whether this opinion is based on experience with subcutaneous or intradermal administration, for there can be no doubt that the latter method is beneficial in certain conditions.

Diet is a very much more important factor in many of the pathological conditions than Dr. Roxburgh suggests; Seborrhœa, Acne Rosacea and certain cases of Psoriasis can sometimes be improved by dietary corrections alone. The part played by focal sepsis is recognised but no mention is made of this factor in Eczema and Psoriasis although many of these cases rapidly respond to the removal of these foci.

Endocrine treatment and Sulphonamides are not given the credit they deserve, for there are definite indications of their value. Avitaminosis is briefly mentioned but reference to Vitamin K is omitted and as this is an alleged skin vitamin it should have been included. It is claimed that local treatment is by far the most important in Eczema whereas many would consider that hygiene and internal factors demand priority. Calcium is said to be of no value in the treatment of skin diseases but this opinion will be widely challenged.

Thus as regards treatment this book falls far short of a desirable standard but the descriptions and differential diagnoses coupled with the excellent illustrations ensure for it a wide degree of popularity. It is unfortunate that practitioners may be handicapped in proving the diagnoses to which they have been so clearly led by inadequate advice on the full and proper treatment of the case.

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